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TAGS: OPRC KMDR FR

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - EUROPE: REFERENDA FALLOUT,
2012 OLYMPICS SYRIA: BAATHIST PARTY CONGRESS -
IRAN: JUNE 17 ELECTIONS
PARIS - TUESDAY, JUNE 07, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

EUROPE: REFERENDA FALLOUT, 2012 OLYMPICS
SYRIA: BAATHIST PARTY CONGRESS
IRAN: JUNE 17 ELECTIONS

(B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

THE BRITISH DECISION TO POSTPONE THE REFERENDUM IN THE UK DOMINATES A NUMBER OF HEADLINES AND RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO CARRIES A COLOR PHOTOGRAPH OF A DEMONSTRATOR HOLDING A SIGN THAT READS "THANK YOU FRANCE, THANK YOU HOLLAND." LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION CLAIMS "LONDON IS THROWING IN THE TOWEL" AND QUALIFIES TONY BLAIR AS A "LUKEWARM AMBASSADOR FOR THE EU" WHILE COMMUNIST L'HUMANITE STATES THAT THE EU CONSTITUTION HAS BECOME A "HOT POTATO." COMMENTARIES ABOUND ON THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE'S LOOMING DECISION BETWEEN PARIS AND LONDON TO HOST THE 2012 GAMES. (SEE PART C)

THE BAATHIST PARTY CONGRESS IN DAMASCUS IS WIDELY REPORTED AND GENERALLY VIEWED AS "DISAPPOINTING," PROMPTING AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRESS OF THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE MIDDLE EAST IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO. COMMUNIST L'HUMANITE HEADLINES "SYRIA: AT A STANDSTILL." (SEE PART C)

THE JUNE 17 ELECTIONS IN IRAN ARE NOT YET A PRINCIPAL FOCUS OF THE INTERNATIONAL STORIES IN THE FRENCH DAILY PRESS, BUT RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO CARRIES A REPORT FROM TEHERAN ANALYZING THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES' DESIRE TO PURSUE IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM. (SEE PART C)

TWO AMERICAN THINKERS, PHILIP GORDON OF THE BOOKINGS INSTITUTE AND JEREMY RIFKIN, OF THE FOUNDATION ON ECONOMIC TRENDS PEN OP-EDS TRANSLATED FOR LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE AND LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION RESPECTIVELY. BOTH PIECES REACT TO THE FRENCH "NO" ON THE EU CONSTITUTION. GORDON POINTS OUT THAT THE APPOINTMENT OF DE VILLEPIN AS PRIME MINISTER EFFECTIVELY DOES AWAY WITH ANY HOPE THE AMERICANS MAY HAVE HAD TO SEE A CHANGE IN FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY.

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

EUROPE: REFERENDA FALLOUT, 2012 OLYMPICS

"PARIS-LONDON: THE FACE-OFF"
THE EDITORIAL BY YVES THREARD IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (06/07): "JACQUES CHIRAC'S FRANCE OR TONY BLAIR'S GREAT BRITAIN? THE DISCUSSION OVER THE SOUNDNESS OF EACH COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC OUTLOOK HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY HEATED. WITH THE TWO COUNTRIES IN A RACE TO HAVE THE MOST INFLUENCE WITHIN THE EU. NOW THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE HAS PARED DOWN ITS CHOICE FOR THE 2012 GAMES TO PARIS AND LONDON. FOR 2012, IF THE EURO-SKEPTICISM OF THE FRENCH IS A NEGATIVE POINT FOR PARIS, GREAT BRITAIN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE WAR IN IRAQ COULD BE A HANDICAP FOR LONDON.. THE CHOICE BETWEEN PARIS AND LONDON WILL NOT BE INSIGNIFICANT FOR THE DIPLOMATIC FUTURE OF THE TWO COUNTRIES."

"ENGLAND STRUTTING THROUGH A EUROPEAN CRISIS"
FRANCOISE CROUIGNEAU WRITES IN ECONOMIC DAILY LES ECHOS (06/07): "THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO POSTPONE THE REFERENDUM IN THE UK IS A WAY FOR THE BRITISH TO AVOID LOOKING LIKE THE GRAVEDIGGERS OF THE EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION AND TO DELAY ITS OFFICIAL, AND COLLECTIVE, BURIAL UNTIL THE EU SUMMIT IN MID-JUNE. THIS MANEUVER IS ESPECIALLY AN EFFECTIVE WAY FOR TONY BLAIR TO KEEP HIS HANDS FREE AS THE UK TAKES ON THE PRESIDENCY OF THE EU. THE CRISIS IN EUROPE OFFERS TONY BLAIR THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE A DREAM THAT IS AT LEAST AS GRAND AS HIS AMBITIONS: TO BECOME THE LEADER OF A UNION REWORKED ACCORDING TO HIS OWN IDEALS. NONETHELESS, THE GOING WILL NOT BE EASY. REINFORCING THE TRANSATLANTIC TIES WILL BE, AT THE LEAST, DIFFICULT FOR TONY BLAIR WHO IS STILL SUFFERING AS A RESULT OF HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE WAR ON IRAQ. TODAY IN WASHINGTON HE WILL BE ABLE TO EVALUATE THE VARIOUS BONES OF CONTENTION, FRIENDLY BUT REAL, BETWEEN HIMSELF AND GEORGE BUSH, NAMELY CONCERNING AID TO AFRICA, AN ISSUE THAT HE DOES

NOT INTEND TO LEAVE IN THE HANDS OF JACQUES CHIRAC DURING THE UPCOMING G8 SUMMIT."

SYRIA: BAATHIST PARTY CONGRESS

"THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE ARAB WORLD IN A RUT"

PIERRE PRIER IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (06/07): "TWO SPECTERS HAUNT THE ARAB WORLD, ISLAMISM AND DEMOCRACY. THE AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES PRETEND TO BE AFRAID OF THE FORMER WHILE THEY TRULY APPREHEND THE LATTER. AMERICAN PRESSURE, POPULAR IMPATIENCE, ECONOMIC FAILURES, ALL PUSH THE MOST ARCHAIC OF REGIMES TO DISCUSS REFORMS. EVEN IN SYRIA WHERE A CONGRESS OF THE CENTRALIZED POWER HAS SUDDENLY BEEN ORGANIZED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN FIVE YEARS. BACKSTAGE IN DAMASCUS, GOVERNMENT CIRCLES SUSPECT THAT PRESIDENT BUSH IS ENCOURAGING THE EXILED SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERS IN ORDER TO CREATE A "SUNNI BALANCE." AFTER HAVING ESTABLISHED THE SHIITES IN POWER IN IRAQ, THE U.S. IS PLOTTING TO FACILITATE THE VICTORY OF THE MAJORITY SYRIAN SUNNIS OVER THE ALLAWIT MINORITY IN POWER. THIS LEADS ARAB COMMENTATORS TO NOTE "THE AMERICANS ARE PLAYING WITH FIRE. THEY ARE SECRETLY NEGOTIATING WITH ISLAMISTS. THEY DO NOT REALIZE WHO THESE PEOPLE REALLY ARE."

"A CONGRESS UNDER PRESSURE FOR THE BAATHISTS"

PIERRE BARBANCEY COMMENTS FROM DAMASCUS FOR COMMUNIST L'HUMANITE (06/07): "IT WOULD BE A EUPHEMISM TO SAY THAT DAMASCUS IS UNDER PRESSURE, BUT IT WOULD ALSO BE MISGUIDED TO THINK THAT THE PRESSURE IS ONLY COMING FROM THE OUTSIDE, OR THAT THE ALMOST DAILY AMERICAN DECLARATIONS AGAINST SYRIA ARE BEHIND THE PRECIPITOUS ORGANIZATION OF THE BAATHIST PARTY CONGRESS. IN FACT, INTERNAL TENSIONS COMPOUNDED WITH EXTERNAL PRESSURE ARE BEHIND THIS CONGRESS, A SIGN THAT THE SYRIAN REGIME IS BEGINNING TO BE RATTLED. BACHAR EL ASSAD'S ENTIRE STRATEGY CONSISTS IN GIVING WASHINGTON SMALL SIGNS OF GOODWILL IN ORDER NOT TO LOSE POWER ALTOGETHER."

IRAN: JUNE 17 ELECTIONS/NUCLEAR PROGRAM

"IN TEHERAN THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES DEFEND NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY"

DELPHINE MINOUI FROM TEHERAN IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (06/07): "IF THERE IS ONE SUBJECT ON WHICH ALL EIGHT CANDIDATES FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AGREE IT IS THE NUCLEAR ISSUE, THEY CONSIDER THAT A `STRONG IRAN' IS AN IRAN THAT PURSUES ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM. THE REAL DIVERGENCE BETWEEN THE CANDIDATES LIES IN THOSE WHO SUPPORT THE TRADITIONAL PRECEPTS OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC AND THOSE WHO ENCOURAGE RENEWED DISCUSSIONS WITH THE U.S.. ALL OF THIS BODES OF INTERMINABLE DISCUSSIONS WITH EUROPE AND FURTHER PRESSURE FROM WASHINGTON. WHICH REMAINS CONVINCED OF IRAN'S INSINCERITY."

WOLFF